

Do it Yourself Waste Assessment



**A simple guide to reducing your business
waste and saving money**

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Brought to you by the Department of Public Works



If you need any assistance or accommodations, please contact Kristen Deitrick, ADA Coordinator, Metro Public Works, 939 Dr. Richard Adams Drive, Nashville, TN 37207; Telephone 615-880-1000.

How to Use This Guide

This guide will help you assess your business waste. You might be asking yourself why it is important or useful to know what is in your dumpsters or trash containers. The answer is simple. Since most businesses are paying for waste disposal, it only makes sense that placing less trash in your dumpster, having a smaller dumpster or having fewer pickups means saving MONEY.

Nashville has recycling companies who will pickup material at little or no cost. If there is a cost with recycling, it is almost always less than the disposal cost for trash. Assessing your waste stream will allow your business to reduce trash, start recycling and begin saving.

Getting Started

Before you begin there are a few things you will need to make the process easier:

- Statements or bills from your waste hauler.
- Size and location of all your dumpsters (if the size of your dumpster or compactor is not on your bill you can call your hauler for the information or measure the container yourself— measure, in yards, the length x height x width = cubic yards).
- And a calculator.

Step One — Estimate the amount of waste you generate that is currently going into your dumpster. Look on your waste collection bill for this information.

Container Type	Container Size (cubic yards)		Number of Containers		Estimate % Full at Pick-up		Number of Monthly Pick-ups		Volume (cubic yards)
Dumpster		Multiply By		Multiply By		Multiply By		Equals	
Compactor									
Other									

Step Two — Determine total monthly waste disposal and collection costs. This information should be itemized on your waste disposal bill. If container rental costs, disposal (tipping) fees and hauling costs are not itemized, just record the total monthly cost.

Monthly Disposal Cost		Monthly Transport/Fuel Cost		Metro Surcharge/Other Fees (if any)		TOTAL Monthly Cost
\$	Plus	\$	Plus	\$	Equals	\$

Step Three — Determine the waste stream and amounts. For an understanding of the types of waste generated, identify each waste stream from point of generation to placement in the garbage dumpster. Using the table below, go through each office, copy room, break area, warehouse, etc. and look into every trash container. You might need to ask individuals working in each area what the procedures are for waste removal or you might do the walk through with the janitorial or cleaning crew. You will need to estimate the amount of each type of waste you find in the trash containers. Once this has been completed, you will be able to determine the total percent for each type of waste you generate and compile that in Step Four.

Department/Area	Waste Type	Who Collects and With What Type Container	Estimate Amount of Waste Produced
EXAMPLE: Offices	Office Paper Food Containers Aluminum Cans Plastic Bottles Cardboard	Cleaning crew collects materials from garbage cans with a rolling 35 gallon container and places in the 8 cubic yard dumpster Cardboard is broken down and collected separately	8 cubic yard dumpster is full every night About 50% of waste is paper, 20 % cardboard, 5% aluminum cans, 10% is plastic bottles and 15% food and other garbage

Step Four — Determine the percentage of material in the waste stream. Using the information you gathered in Step Three, add up the totals for each type of material found in the trash containers and record the totals in the table. This step is important because it will allow you to calculate just how much of your business waste is recyclable. Once again, it might be useful to talk with the janitorial staff as they will best know if the percentages appear accurate. You might also decide to repeat Steps Three and Four several times to get an average.

DO IT YOURSELF WASTE ASSESSMENT

Material Type	% of Total Waste
Paper (office paper, copy paper, newspaper, magazines, catalogues, junk mail, etc.)	%
Cardboard	%
Aluminum Cans	%
Metal Cans	%
Glass Bottles	%

Material Type	\$ of Total Waste
Plastic Bottles	%
Food Waste	%
Other	%
Other	%
Garbage	%

Total Waste Stream	100 %
Total Waste to Recycle/Reduce	%

Step Five — Determine the reduced amount of trash to be landfilled if you implement a recycling/reduction program. Now you are ready to calculate your adjusted volume of trash. Record below the cubic yards of waste you were previously generating, the percent of the waste you believe could be reduced or recycled and calculate the cubic yards of waste you will most likely be generating in the future.

Previous Amount of Waste Generated	Multiply By	Adjusted Percent of Waste (% from Step Four)	Equals	Adjusted Volume of Waste
Cubic Yards		%		Cubic Yards

Step Six — Determine the potential savings from reduced trash. Using the adjusted volume of waste found in Step Five, call your waste hauler and find out the waste disposal charges for the adjusted amount of waste. You may need a smaller dumpster or to have your current dumpster emptied less often. (One of the biggest mistakes businesses make is to have their dumpster emptied too often. Always make sure you are maximizing the space in your dumpster. A half-full dumpster will cost you the same per pickup as a completely full dumpster). Either way, the cost will be reduced. If you do not currently have a contract with a waste hauler, use this opportunity to call around and get quotes. Then compare the NEW costs with the OLD costs in Step Two.

Adjusted Waste Disposal Cost (new cost from hauler)	Previous Waste Disposal Cost (TOTAL Monthly Cost from Step Two)	Waste Disposal Savings
\$	\$	\$

Step Seven — Start a recycling program. You can find a list of companies that collect or accept recyclable material by going to www.nashville.gov/recycle and clicking on the link for businesses. Many companies offer recycling at little or no cost.

Setting up a Waste Reduction Program

Starting a new waste reduction/recycling program at your business is easy and doesn't require a lot of effort. Here are some steps to starting a recycling program and making it successful.

- Get support from the top down and inform everyone that your business is going to start recycling. Ask the janitorial or cleaning staff for suggestions.
- Appoint an individual or committee to look at the current waste being generated by the business and to make recycling recommendations.
- Conduct a waste assessment to help determine what you have that is recyclable, where it is and how much your business can save by recycling.
- After determining what you have to recycle, contact companies that will either pick-up or accept the various materials. You can find a list online at www.nashville.gov/recycle. Just follow the "business" link.
- Create signs, write articles for the employee newsletter, send out e-mail notices; whatever it takes to let folks know what can be recycled, where it needs to go and why you are recycling.
- Integrate recycling into your normal trash collection. Make recycling a routine part of your normal waste management. Set up recycling bins next to your trash cans. It's even a good idea to give individual employees their own boxes to collect paper that can be recycled from their desks. You will quickly learn that people do things out of convenience. If the recycling bin is right next to the trash can, people will realize that recycling isn't as cumbersome as they might have thought.
- Adopt a waste reduction plan and make it part of your corporate culture. Include it in your company handbook, post signs around the office and educate your staff about your commitment to recycling.
- Track your success and share the results. And don't forget to let your customers know about your commitment to recycling.
- Take it one step further and look for ways to reduce waste. Re-examine your purchasing contracts. Review your list of vendors and the supplies you buy. Chances are you can order items that are made from recyclable materials or that are more environmentally friendly. Once you get into the habit of recycling at work, purchasing brings the whole process full circle...if you are trying to reduce the waste coming out of your office, you'll also want to reduce the amount of waste coming into your office.
- Finally, consider submitting your business for local recognition in Nashville's Business Recycler of the Year Award program. More information can be found at www.nashville.gov/recycle.